

## **Yerkes-Dodson Law**

Dr. Clayton Cook: I don't want to vilify the concept of stress, because not all stress is bad. In fact, some stress can be really good, and stress can be used to enhance our performance and not necessarily undermine our performance. And the best way to consider how not all stress is bad is the Yerkes-Dodson curve, which is basically a bell curve that shows the relationship between the amount of stress someone experiences and their performance.

Clayton: So the first thing we know from the Yerkes-Dodson curve is having no stress isn't good, and it undermines performance because essentially the person isn't motivated, there's no skin in the game, or what they're being asked to do isn't necessarily important to them. What we also know is that moderate manageable levels of stress maximize or enhance someone's performance. And the reason why is because the person's motivated, whatever they're being asked to do is somewhat important to them, yet they're able to maintain kind of self-control. It doesn't become too intense.

Clayton: Now, the worst-case scenario is when stress becomes too intense and it's unmanageable, and what we know is the person enters a state of exhaustion and disorganization, so performance really tanks under high, unmanageable levels of stress.